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SMK Assunta

OUTDATED infrastructure, poor attitudes by drivers and motorcyclists, as well as ignorance by students are among the factors that contribute to the traffic chaos at SMK Assunta.

There are 1,660 students enrolled in the school's Remove and Forms One to Five classes. The school was set up almost 60 years ago and is

Safety, a priority for all

Heavy traffic, selfish driving and irresponsible parking habits are perennial

located at Jalan Changgai in Section 9, Petaling Jaya.

The peak afternoon traffic is between noon to 2pm, when students from the morning session rush to leave the school and students from the afternoon session are dropped off for their classes.

The situation at peak time can be quite chaotic as hundreds of students would exit or enter the school. Cars and buses would be double-parked on both sides of the road, and traffic flow is reduced to one lane on each side.

"There are more cars nowadays, but the roads have not become wider," said school Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairman Alan Goh.

"People are also more impatient, be it the drivers or children. Everyone wants to move quickly and leave as fast as they can."

Although there is a zebra crossing, motorcyclists would still weave in between traffic and motorists would ignore the traffic lights, even when it is the pedestrians' right of way to cross the road.

Traffic warden Vijeyaledchumi A.G. Pillai, who is better known as Viji, said there had been occasions when she was nearly knocked down when carrying out her duties.

"There are cars or motorbikes that don't stop at the zebra crossing. The situation is made worse by heavy vehicles or trailers that use the same road," said Viji.

"Some motorcyclists are also quite reckless. They ride into the drop-off or pick-up areas and either nearly knock down students or get knocked down themselves."

Goh said the one-way loop system in Section 52 also affected traffic in Jalan Changgai.

When the school's appeals to the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) fell on deaf ears, senior assistant (academic) Norliza Mustapa said the school turned to the Taman Gasing Indah Rukun Tetangga (RT) for help.

"We worked with MBPJ and the

problems facing most schools. All stakeholders need to get involved to solve these problems as learning to use the road is an important life lesson. *StarEducate* visited two schools in Petaling Jaya to see how this long-standing issue is being tackled.

police to improve the traffic situation," said RT chairman Eric Chew.

"The police stationed an officer outside the school for a short while last year and this year. The policeman ensured that cars stopped at the zebra crossing, while haphazardly parked cars and motorists who violated red lights were reprimanded.

"Last year, MBPJ did some improvements to the school's road infrastructure."

These include shortening sidewalk rails to ensure it is aligned with the zebra crossing, widening the zebra crossing, and increasing the thickness of the rumble strips (yellow lines painted on the road to slow traffic down).

Chew also organised a road safety campaign involving the school, police and RT.

"We had a demonstration to simulate a scenario of what would happen when students use the zebra crossing properly and when they are running all over.

"The police was also present to talk to the girls about traffic and road safety," he said.

Norliza said the road safety campaign had seen tremendous improvement, as there was a reduction of cases where students were knocked down by vehicles.

Chew suggested that the road safety campaign be held yearly to ensure awareness and continuity among the school's community.

"Continuous involvement by the police would also ensure that there

is enforcement," he said.

"The police could also empower the traffic warden as a police volunteer reserve (PVR). The PVR would have the power of a police constable for the short duration when she is on duty.

"She can take down the licence plate details of traffic offenders and pass these to the police for further action. This would also help reduce police manpower."

Goh said there was a need for the school to work with the authorities to ensure the safety and security of the students.

"The infrastructure needs to be improved in line with increasing traffic, such as by lengthening the sheltered pedestrian walkway.

"The attitudes of bus drivers, parents and motorists also need to be improved when these people are on the road," he said, adding that letters were given to parents to get them to cooperate with the road safety campaign.

In terms of improvements needed for the school's traffic infrastructure, Norliza suggested that the blinking lights to alert motorists be repaired, CCTVs be installed to create greater awareness among road users and for rumble strips along Jalan Changgai to be lengthened.

"The PTA, school, RT and police all need to work together as the school is part of our community," said Chew.

"It's our responsibility to help as stakeholders and to enhance the wellbeing of the community."



Readiness: Azharin says parents are concerned whether traffic management and safety plans are ready.

SK and SMK Bandar Utama Damansara 4

Parents of students who go to two schools located along Dataran Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya, are worried about their children's safety once access from that road to Persiaran Surian is opened to traffic.

The access has been closed for years due to a dispute between two developers. However, access in the opposite direction from Persiaran Surian to Dataran Bandar Utama remains open to traffic.

Parents and school buses that want to exit the area after dropping school children off at SK Bandar Utama Damansara (BUD) 4 and SMK BUD 4 use either Tingkat Bandar Utama or Lebu Bandar Utama.

Dataran Bandar Utama is also used by vehicles going to 1 Utama Shopping Centre's outdoor parking, as well as trucks and buses heading to the mall's loading bay and bus terminal.

"We were alerted about the opening of the access when we saw roadworks being carried out last month. We were in the dark about the details, as neither the schools



In the dark: Laili says the schools and PTAs were not told about the opening of the access.

nor PTAs were informed," said SMK BUD4 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) vice chairman Laili Murad.

"The representatives from both schools and PTAs then met local councillor Peter Chong to find out what traffic plans and safety measures would be implemented."

Laili said the two schools are requesting for speed bumps on both sides of the road, a zebra crossing, rumble strips, traffic lights and a lay-by for students to be dropped off on the opposite side of the road.

"We were also informed that a traffic consultant would be engaged to do a traffic study and the results presented to MBPJ. But we were not informed about the status of the study," said SK BUD4 PTA chairman Azharin Yusof.

"The existing situation (with the access closed) makes it harder for vehicles to speed. Safety-wise, it is also better for the school children."

Azharin said they are concerned that nobody knows when the access will be opened, and whether traffic management and safety plans would be placed in time.

While acknowledging that the access opening would be good for the public, Nur Sarah Lee said the expected increase in traffic would



be a problem.
 “The cars move very fast, and there have been occasions when I was nearly knocked down by delivery trucks heading to the shopping mall’s loading bay,” said the housewife whose son is a Year Six student at SK BUD4 and will be moving on to SMK BUD4 next year.

“The peak time in the afternoon is between 12.30pm to 1.30pm, or later depending on the day and activities held. Cars and school buses would be double- or triple-parked on the road, while waiting to pick the students up.”

Nur Sarah said the situation used to be better when a Rela officer was hired by the primary school to direct traffic and ensure children crossed the road safely. The service has been stopped since March.

The secondary school has an enrolment of 1,150 students, while the primary school has an enrolment of more than 700. Both are single-session schools.

Chong said the access is expected to be opened tomorrow, when the roadworks are completed.

“As jurisdiction of Dataran Bandar Utama is still under the developer, it’s up to them to propose the traffic management plans and safety structures to be implemented, while MBPJ makes the final decision and approval.

“However, parents should also educate their children on road safety rules and shouldn’t be inconsiderate by double-parking,” he said.

The short-term plan, which Chong said will be in place before the access is opened, is for the installation of signboards, flashing lights and two speed bumps near the schools, as well as manpower for traffic management.

“The manpower will either come from Bandar Utama’s auxiliary police or MBPJ’s traffic personnel,” he said.

“The developer and MBPJ will also be asked to inform the school about the access opening, and the school will inform the parents.”

A mid-term plan would be to

have a zebra crossing with a lollipop man present to direct traffic.

“The council will ask the developer to provide the zebra crossing, but the lollipop man has to be jointly provided by the PTAs,” said Chong.

“The long-term plan would be up to the developer. One is to build a pedestrian bridge near the junction to Persiaran Surian.

“Another is for the T-junction at Dataran Bandar Utama and Tingkat Bandar Utama to be turned into a cross junction to create a new access to the outdoor car park, while the existing access will be closed.”

Chong said the developer clarified that it had met the school representatives (without the PTA) on the issue, and that there are plans to arrange for a meeting between the developer, PTA and school representatives after the access is opened to review any shortcomings.

What the council says

PETALING Jaya City Council (MBPJ) public relations officer Zainun Zakaria said the council acknowledged that traffic was still fast despite the presence of a zebra crossing and push button traffic light at Jalan Changgai for SMK Assunta.

“MBPJ has plans to raise the level of the road near the push button traffic light to slow down the traffic,” she said.

As for SK Bandar Utama Damansara 4 and SMK Bandar Utama Damansara 4, Zainun said the access road near both schools had been initially approved (during the construction stage).

“But the opening was delayed due to a conflict between two developers. It is now opened to traffic,” she said.



1 Joint effort: Goh and Chew (seated, left and second from left), Norliza (seated, second from right) and Viji (standing, right) having a discussion about SMK Assunta and students’ safety with other senior school teachers and PTA members.

2 Busy road: Traffic at Dataran Bandar Utama can be chaotic during the afternoon peak hour, as vehicles come and go to pick the school students up. The same road is also used by vehicles going to 1 Utama Shopping Centre’s outdoor parking, as well as trucks and buses heading to the mall’s loading bay and bus terminal.

3 Caution: Parents of SK Bandar Utama Damansara 4 and SMK Bandar Utama Damansara 4 want to know if traffic management and safety plans are in place.

4 Access: Parents are worried about their children’s safety once access from Dataran Bandar Utama (right) to Persiaran Surian (left) is opened to traffic near their schools in Bandar Utama.